

Washington, D.C. - Continuing her fight to make the Surface Transportation Board more accountable to taxpayers in cases like the CN rail expansion, Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) reintroduced legislation that would require the Surface Transportation Board to consider the effects of rail expansion on local communities and taxpayers as part of its core mission.

Bean was again joined by House Transportation Committee Chairman James Oberstar (MN-08), who, along with other Representatives from across the nation, is an original cosponsor of the bill. Bean and Oberstar first introduced the bill last year as part of a fight by Bean and a bi-partisan coalition of suburban Illinois members against Canadian National Railway's proposed purchase of the EJ&E rail line.

"This legislation would require the agency to give proper consideration to the safety, quality of life and economic hazards placed on communities when they approve or disapprove a potential acquisition, merger, or expansion of rail traffic on existing tracks," Bean said, "While this legislation does not affect any previously approved transactions, it would apply to any new or reconsidered decisions by the STB.

"Though the STB approved the CN deal on Christmas Eve last year, there will be ongoing monitoring and enforcement actions as CN increases train traffic through our communities," Bean said. "So far CN has been resisting the small amount of mitigation they were required to perform under the STB decision. In the meantime, our communities continue to appeal that decision."

The Surface Transportation Board (STB), a three-member panel appointed by the Administration, currently holds oversight over any merger or transfer of control of any two major railroads. By law, approval of a sale or transaction is limited mainly to anti-competitive and worker safety concerns. STB's review of environmental impacts of the Canadian National proposal was mandated by separate environmental laws, but is not part of the STB's core mission.

The Taking Responsible Action for Community Safety (TRACS) Act, H.R. 3410, would give the board authority over any transaction involving at least one major (Class 1) railroad and would add a critical requirement for the STB to consider "the safety and environmental effects of the proposed transaction, including the effects on local communities, such as public safety, grade

crossing safety, hazardous materials transportation safety, emergency response time, noise, and socioeconomic impacts; and the effect of the proposed transaction on intercity rail passenger transportation and commuter rail passenger transportation.”

If the adverse effects to communities outweigh the proposed benefits to commerce and competitiveness, the STB would be required to mitigate or reject the transaction.

“The current process puts the interests of industry over those of American families and taxpayers,” Bean said. “This legislation provides balance and better reflects American values by protecting the rights of our constituents and communities.”

The TRACS Act, H.R. 3410, is sponsored by Rep. Melissa Bean (IL-08), and is originally cosponsored by Transportation Committee Chairman Rep. James Oberstar (MN-08) and Reps. Shelley Berkley (NV-01), Judy Biggert (IL-13), Brian Bilbray (CA-50), Bruce Braley (IA-01), Diana DeGette (CO-01), Bill Foster (IL-14), Debbie Halvorson (IL-11), Jane Harman (CA-36), Tim Holden (PA-17), Ron Kind (WI-03), Don Manzullo (IL-16), Mike Thompson (CA-01), Peter Roskam (IL-6), John Shimkus (IL-19), Pete Visclosky (IN-01), and Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (FL-20).